

The Inner Water User

No, this isn't going to be an article about how aspects of your upbringing or perhaps your political affiliation drive a compulsion to have lush green lawns. Rather it is a discussion of a relatively mundane subject; water system maintenance, aka your plumbing. The play on words in the title comes from the notion of the "indoor water user".

The whole concept of the plumbing system is to contain water until such time as a valve is opened to let the water out. Think of valves as faucet handles, toilet handles and the like. In your homes, there are lots of opportunities for leaks, and these leaks can, individually and collectively, send a lot of valuable water down the sewer pipes without it being used. Depending on the severity of the leak(s), that wastage can be hundreds or thousands of gallons per month.

A New Take on an Old Joke:

Mr or Mrs Jones, this is the water company. We are calling to ask if your toilet is running? Why yes it is. Well go catch it before it gets away!

Rather than have the city staff call everyone and repeat that joke, the City and the Water Conservation Committee have worked to put together some items to help detect and fix leaks. First there is a pack of water conservation goodies, free to the asking. There are also dye tablets for testing out toilet leaks, and finally, there is an "Indoor Conservation Checklist". These items are available from the city, or at any of the events where the Water Conservation booth is staffed. If you don't feel up to doing the work yourself, call your handyman or plumber and ask them to perform the checklist.

A couple of items aren't on the checklist, but ought to be on your list of things to check.

- 1) Hoses – Make sure that when you are watering, all the water is coming out the business end of the hose. Make sure the connections to the hose bib (faucet) are tight and leak free, and that the hose isn't leaking. Also, use a spray head on the hose that cuts off the water.
- 2) Sprinkler system. Make sure the heads aren't doing a "Jed Clampett bubbling crude" impression. This wastes a lot of water. Make sure the heads are delivering the water to the intended target, not the sidewalk. Also, make sure the anti-siphon valve isn't leaking, or any of the piping leaking, as again these systems deliver a lot of water.
- 3) Swamp Coolers. If you have one of these, make sure that the supply lines aren't leaking, and that the float valve inside cuts off the water, when the reservoir is filled.

Fixup or Remodeling Ideas

With all the refinancing activity going on, there are lots of cashouts and remodeling projects going on. When planning these, why not build in some water conservation ideas. For all of the ideas that follow, include a comparison of water usage for your alternatives.

Toilets - The standard new toilets sold today use approximately 1.6 gallons per flush. This compares with older models that use twice or more per flush. There is even a brand from Australia (caroma) that uses a dual flush mode, .8 and 1.6 gallons (think #1 and #2). You need to be a careful shopper here, since not all toilets work as well as others. Some of the best known brands have spotty reputations, or may have models that are duds. For those who are “web enabled” check out <http://www.terrylove.com/crtoilet.htm> for an excellent discussion of alternatives and “real world” ratings. For those interested in the Caroma toilet, Rampart Supply in Colorado Springs stocks and sells one model.

Shower Heads - By government regulation, all new shower heads are supposed to meet the 2.5 gallon per minute (gpm) standard. If your heads are older than you can remember, then this might be a good upgrade. Keep in mind, those of you admiring those wondrous bathrooms in the magazines, that *each* head uses 2.5 gpm, so five heads would use 12.5 gpm.

Appliances - Of the two major water using appliances, washers and dishwashers, washers have a better story to tell. The new front loading models use considerably less water than the top loaders of all, and if you buy right, have better capacities, since they ditch the agitator. With dishwashers, the water saving designs are more prominent in the European models, but these tend to be higher ticket items, and aren’t going to fit every remodeling budget. However, make sure the appliance folks know you are concerned about water consumption, and don’t buy unless they can produce water usage numbers. For the web enabled, check out <http://www.h2ouse.org/> for a wealth of information on all aspects of water conservation.

For those wishing to discuss that lawn compulsion, the doctor is in.